

CONTEMPORARY PRAISE EXPERIENCE ORIENTATION

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The focus of contemporary praise music is the same as Catholic mysticism and the Charismatic movement: an experience of God as opposed to a life of faith in God's Word.

This is evident in many reports about contemporary praise.

The Integrity Worship Institute, for example, recently joined hands with the University of Mobile (Alabama) to offer a degree in worship leadership. Mark Foley, president of the university, said that the goal is to train worship leaders who can go into a church "to lead a particular group of people TO ENCOUNTER GOD in a way that is best for them."

Notice the emphasis on "encountering God." Notice, too, the emphasis on men worshipping God "in a way that is best for them." This is an admission of the man-centeredness of contemporary praise music. Does the true worship of God change according to the situation? Is it relative? Can different people worship God differently according to their own desires and needs and tastes? Biblically, the answer is no, but we see that the contemporary praise movement is focused as much on man's part in worship as upon God and His sovereign and unchangeable character and truth. And, do not forget that the one who stated this is the president of a Baptist institution. It is obvious that he has been deeply influenced by the contemporary praise movement and its charismatic philosophy, and this is why he is so at harmony with the radically charismatic Integrity Worship Institute.

The Baptist Press report about the new degree program observes that Integrity Worship Ministries was formed to help "Christian leaders worldwide EXPERIENCE GOD'S PRESENCE."

The focus on having an experience of God rather than knowing Him by faith through the Bible is the essence of Catholic mysticism, which is very popular today even in evangelical circles. To the contrary, though, the Lord Jesus exalted faith over sight and experience. Thomas required a physical experience before he would believe in the resurrected Christ. Jesus corrected this error. "Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: BLESSED ARE THEY THAT HAVE NOT SEEN, AND YET HAVE BELIEVED" (John 20:29). The Apostle Paul said that "we walk by faith NOT BY SIGHT" (2 Cor. 5:7). And faith comes only from the Word of God (Rom. 10:17). Faith does not come from within us or from sensual experiences.

The Catholic mystics used the Bible, but they were not Bible- and truth-centered in their Christian walk; they were, rather, experience centered; and that is a grave and fatal error. It is exactly the same error that lies at the heart of the Charismatic movement. It is the error that was central to the ministry of the late John Wimber, founder of the Vineyard movement. And it is one of the errors that is at the heart of the contemporary praise movement.

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